

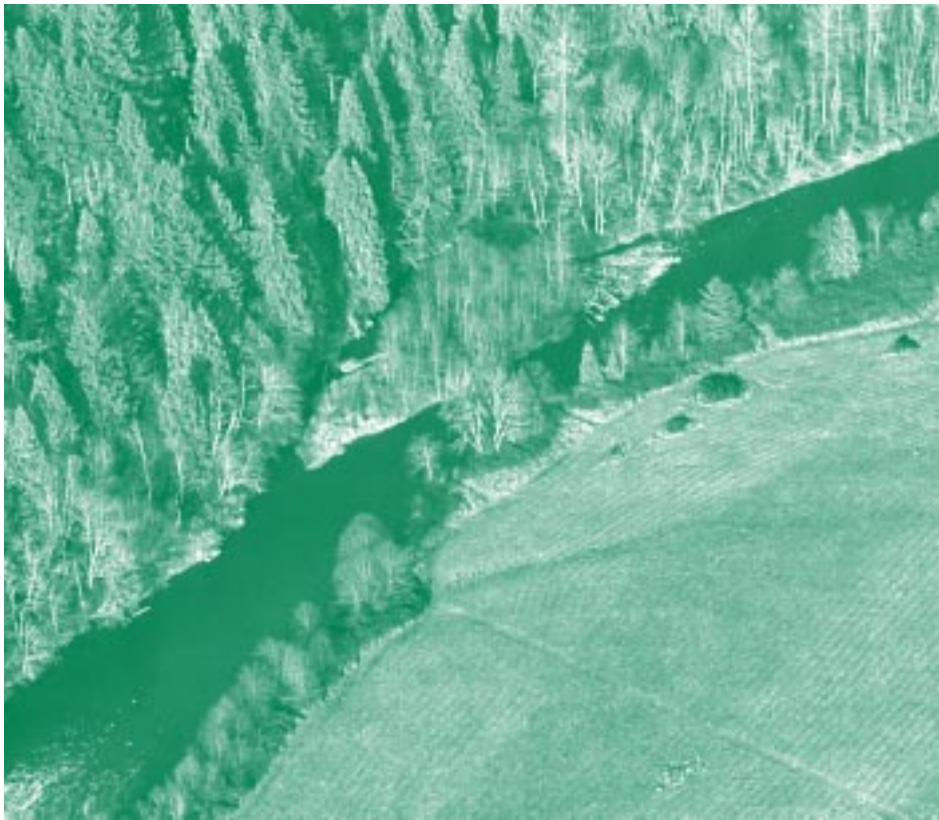
Shoreline Rules

A few months ago, the state Department of Ecology released its plan for updating shoreline rules. This year, I have been working with my colleagues to create a new plan that brings common sense and flexibility to the state’s shoreline rules.

We will be working toward a plan that:

- Allows flexibility for rural areas that are trying to attract economic development
- Focuses on areas with the highest growth, and the most endangered species
- Targets regulations to areas with clear environmental problems

Above all, we believe that the state should respect the interests of local people – farmers and businesses, city and county governments.



Representative
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Dear Friends:

The Washington State Legislature is well into this year’s 105-day regular session. We have been working on a number of difficult issues this year including the state’s energy crisis, transportation, the proposed shorelines regulations, and balancing the state budget.

In the next few weeks, we will face a number of challenges as we seek reasonable solutions to the problems facing many working families. As we work to make government more efficient and accountable, I will continue to put people above politics.

The most important job a lawmaker does is listen to you – the working families that are the heart and soul of our rural communities. I remain committed to working families, and I look forward to hearing your ideas on ways to improve the quality of life we all enjoy on the Olympic Peninsula.

Respectfully yours,

Lynn Kessler
State Representative
24th Legislative District



Transportation

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation spent two years studying the state’s transportation system. I have been working with my colleagues to put the best recommendations into action.

It is important that we get the state moving again. Traffic jams in the Puget Sound area keep our products from reaching the market on time, impacting the economic vitality of our state – urban and rural. Locally, we need to keep our roads and highways in good condition.

We also need to find ways to help people spend less time in their cars, and more time with their families. In the last 20 years, the state’s population has grown 40 percent. But the total vehicle miles traveled on our roads has soared by 60 percent.



Budget

One of the biggest challenges we will face this year is balancing the state budget. Over the past ten years, citizens have passed a number of initiatives. Some have reigned in state spending while others have mandated more spending on prisons, schools and other important state needs.

As a result, the state is in a situation where we will need \$22.2 billion to maintain current services.

Add to this, three initiatives passed last fall:

- Initiative 728: an initiative dealing with public schools that will reduce class sizes, extend learning programs, expand teacher training, and construct new facilities.
Cost: \$486 million
- Initiative 732: increases salaries for public school teachers, and other public school employees.
Cost: \$345 million to \$450 million
- Initiative 722: nullifies certain tax and fee increases, exempts vehicles from property taxes, and limits property tax increases to 2 percent, except on new construction.
Cost: Reduces the state budget by \$39 million

This all adds up to a big challenge for state lawmakers. Of course, I will be looking for ways to make government more accountable, and more efficient. I will also work with my col-



leagues to stretch every dollar we spend and protect the services on which our rural families depend. However, we still face a tremendous challenge, and some tough decisions will have to be made.

Energy

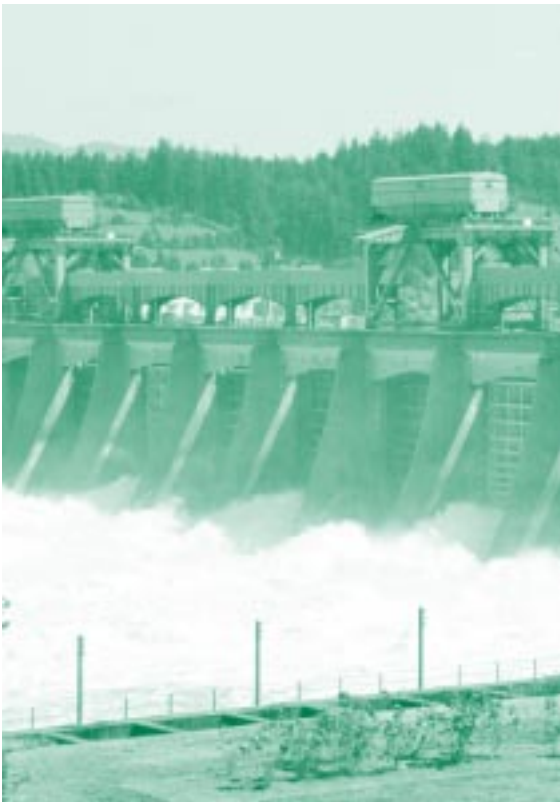
This year’s unseasonably dry winter could have a big effect on rural communities as utilities struggle to generate enough energy to keep our lights on, and our homes warm.

Many of the dams we depend on for power simply do not have enough water running through them this year. It has been reported that the existing snowbank in the mountains is much lower than normal, which means we could be in short supply of energy this spring and summer.

For many families, these facts could mean higher energy bills. Some of us are already feeling the pinch.

This session, we will be looking for solutions to the state’s energy problems. We will also be looking for ways to provide assistance to low-income families that are having a tough time paying their utility bills. Here are some tips to help keep your power bills down:

- Go fluorescent: Compact fluorescent bulbs use less energy and last 10 times longer than regular lights.
- Hot water: Set your water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Hot water is a big part of your monthly water bill.
- Turn the dial: Turn down your thermostat to 68 degrees and to 55 degrees when you’re away from home or asleep.
- Watch the sun: Keep your drapes and blinds closed on cloudy days to keep heat in, but open drapes and blinds on sunny days to soak up the free heat.
- Shorter showers: Keep your showers to five minutes or less if you can. Switching to efficient shower heads can also help; the new shower heads use two-and-a-half gallons a minute or less. It takes a lot of energy to warm a single gallon of water.



Bears and Cougars

Please use this toll-free telephone number to report any alarming encounters you have with bear or cougars – 1 (800) 879-6069.

The frequency of bear and cougar encounters with humans has grown in recent years. This is a serious public safety concern that threatens humans, pets and livestock. Wildlife officials say it is important to promptly report wildlife sightings and encounters, before animals become a nuisance.

